A sentimental journey down Bunting Lane

By Jessie Fay Forrest

A few days ago, a trip down Bunting Lane left me with a hollow feeling in my bank of happy memories of Poquoson. The house where Ed and Bert Bunting had lived and raised their family had disappeared from the face of the earth! One day it was there and the next, there was just a smooth depression as though the house had never existed. Thinking about it for several days brought to mind the pleasant hours I had spent on "the Lane."

Had television been available in the early years, when radio was barely known, the advertising medium would only need to have said "Bunting Lane" in order to conjure up in our imaginations the image of "squeaky clean." No picture would have been necessary. The yards were always neatly mowed and trimmed and the flower beds were always the envy of the rest of the area. Somehow whether the families living in various houses were large or small, these surroundings were always perfectly manicured. Houses were in excellent state of repair and always appeared freshly painted.

There must have been a great deal of labor connected with these chores, but it was never noticable to this passerby. That grass just seemed to refuse to grow beyond an inch and a half high and to my youthful mind, it had the texture of soft velvet. The flower beds apparently gobbled up weeds as soon as they appeared. The "lawn" at my home had large bare spots where "home and first bases" were located. Several attempts to plant various flowers were made through the years but they rarely survived. Our stand of "wire grass," however, was second to none.

When I ride down "the Lane" now, sadness merges with happy memories as mental lists of those no longer among us are compiled. Perhaps tops in fondest memories is Crooks Topping, known to everyone of every age as "Bookie." One of Poquoson's true treasures was lost when he died a few years ago. He came to the Lane without the inherited neatness possessed by most of the Lane natives, but when he married Bessie, one of the Bunting girls, he fell into the family habits very comfortably. Miss Bessie and their daughter, Mary, were the loves of his life. Mary married Sam Moore and Bookie adopted him readily. When we visited there, he joined in the fun along with the girls. Miss Bessie was a bit more reserved but she made us all feel very much at home.

One cold, windy and wet evening it was decided to make fudge. "Bookie" was in the kitchen with us and like us, he was willing but not particularly capable. The mixture was cooked and then placed on the cold (closed-in) backporch to cool. After a suitable time, it was tested and found to be of the consistency of cream soup. It smelled delicious but slicing was out of the question. It was further cooked and cooled and each time it was tested its lack of firmness caused gales of laughter with "Bookie" joining in. Finally becoming exasperated with the mess being made in her spotless kitchen, Miss Bessie took a hand. We never did find out what we did wrong but I remember that that fudge tasted delectible when cold and eaten with a spoon, topped off with gales of laughter!

Two more buddies I counted on the Lane were Mortimer and Lou Bunting Rand. Miss Lou was sister to Miss Bessie and they lived on either side of their father's home. These were the parents of that sweetheart of P.H.S. who retired this year, Cora Rand Everhart. Mortimer V. Rand was an early "newcomer" from Connecticut and I didn't know he was a Yankee for years. Geography taught me that anyone from that far north had to be a Yankee, but he didn't fit the mold that my Confederate grandfather brought home from Sharpsburg. He adored his "Skeetsie" (Cora) and was one of the gentlest men I ever knew. Miss Lou claimed she had to be tough for both of them! Where their daughter was concerned, however, they were softies. Mary, Cora and I spent many a Saturday night at Buckroe Beach because Mr. Rand was more than willing to spoil us. He and Miss Lou would wait patiently while we carefully considered which ride to visit next. It was very important to stretch out our "spending money" as far as possible. When all "our" cash was gone, Mr. Rand would occasionally provide the means for "one last ride" before starting home.

Aside from the yards and flower beds, Miss Bessie and Miss Lou were tiptop housekeepers. Everything was always spotless and right where it should be. The phrase, "You could eat off her kitchen floor," must have originated on Bunting Lane. Recently I heard a Highland household in Scotland referred to in this manner and I thought immediately of these two sisters. Their mother, Miss Viana Forrest Bunting, had taught them well, and they never forgot.

A household which I loved to visit was that of Ed and Bert Bunting. In the days before anything called a beauty shop came to Poquoson, their daughters, Nell and Verlyn, would "set" our hair in curls on Saturday. I would have a shampoo at home and walk through the woods to their home and wait my turn, chatting happily with the older girls and feeling quite grown up. While Nell was a bit older, she never "talked down" to us children.

The younger daughter, Edna Pearl, known fondly as "Skinny," and a son, named Otis, made up their household. Otis was one of the handsomest men that ever lived anywhere. He skippered a trawl boat and married one of my cousins, Thelma Forrest. All the Messick community joined in mouring his passing with Thelma, Otis Jr., Judy and his parents when Otis was lost at sea off Gloucester, Mass. one summer. The girls still live here in town - Edna Pearl married James Teague, Verlyn married Villa Watkins and Nell married Norman Pauls.

Just across the road from Miss Lou's house, where G.S. and Lucille Hunt Forrest now live, was a field owned by Mr. Will Holloway. he grew all kinds of vegetables for home use and market, but the thing most remembered about his fields was the huge corner area where large, red, wild strawberries grew every summer. He was very understanding about the fact that we climbed over his fence and helped ourselves every year. Some times when I pass Lucille's yard, regrets surface when I see her neat lawn replacing those lucious strawberry plants. There were no houses on the west side of the Lane then until you reached what is now Holly Street.

At the Joe Frank and Georgie Bunting household, one memory lingers. Miss Georgie looked so much like my Aunt Fannie. Both ladies were from the Saunders family but I didn't know that at the time. They were round-faced ladies with very nice skin and twinkling eyes. I never knew them as well as some of the others because their children were old and I didn't frequent their home. My contacts in passing left pleasant memories, however. They knew how to make a small girl feel welcome. Their daughters married boys from Hampton and Fox Hill. Della married Clarence Johnson, Edith married Elmer Goodson and Janie married first Bob Copeland and then Herbert Spain. Their son, Joe Frank Jr., married a girl from York County.

Mr. Sam Rollins and his wife, Rosie Bunting, were next door to the Joe Bunting's and I was very comfortable with them. Mr. Sam was a bit gruff until you watched his eyes - they crinkled at the corners and not just from squinting at the sun. Miss Rosie was a very handsome older lady and I always thought she must have been as beautiful in her younger days as her older daughter Rosa was then. Ethel - the younger daughter - was nearer my age while the "boys," Tom (Sinney) and Floyd (Tooley) were older. That was a merry household and I enjoyed them when I visited with Mary and Cora. The "boys" were great teasers and Ethel usually proposed things to do which would startle both her parents and us!

Bunting Lane ended at the present intersection of Lodge Road. When we walked home from school, we had to climb the fence into the cornfield of John Dan'l. Carmines, or go down the path between the Bunting families' houses to the woods and proceed toward home on the woods path. Mr. John Dan'l. usually had a servicable stile available but if not, his gates were always sturdy and we were excellent climbers.

We had no need of a "neighborhood watch" sign. The freedom to knock at any door if we needed help was felt by every child who every walked to school down "the Lane." A skinned knee didn't have to wait until we reached home. The thought of anyone molesting or abusing us was furtherest from our minds and if it had occurred, the well-known Bunting temper would have flared and the individual would have been dealt with severely.

There were many communities in Poquoson blessed with the caring spirit of "the Lane" but very few of them were as "squeaky clean" in the houses and as neat in the yards as Bunting Lane in my new Pocosin in the 1920's and 30's.

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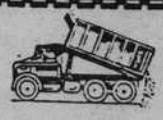

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